

The Work and the Way of the Cross

Often a wrong expectation of the Christian life is created by the way in which the Gospel is presented. New converts are sometimes brought under the impression that, because they have accepted Jesus as Saviour, their problems ought automatically to disappear. Often disillusionment is the result when it does not happen. What sometimes contributes to this situation is the ignorance concerning the role of the Blood and the Cross in the doctrine of salvation. The main purpose of the Blood of Christ is to reconcile the repentant sinner with the Heavenly Father by being a propitiation for his sin (**1 John 2:2; 4:10**). It restores fellowship with God and after death, it qualifies him for eternal life. It makes heaven his home, but does not necessarily make his home heaven. Sometimes, to get your house in order, requires the practical application of some Biblical principles of stewardship. Often, the fact that own effort is required to set some things right in one's life, is under emphasised. Paul points to one's own responsibility when he writes:

"...continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose" (Phil.2:12-13).

As salvation, in terms of eternal life, is a free gift from God (**Eph.2:8-9**), what must be worked out in this life, must be what is referred to in **Rom.14:17**, which is *"righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."* Radical steps must sometimes be taken in order to restore Godly order in certain situations in life. This is what Jesus referred to when He figuratively stated:

"And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell" (Matt.5:30).

The Gospel message in Scripture makes it clear that to "accept" Jesus implies that His teachings must be obeyed. Zodhiates defines the Greek word *lambano*, translated in **John 1:12** as *"to receive"*, or *"to accept"* Him as follows:

"Metaphorically of a teacher, to receive, acknowledge, embrace and follow his instructions and his doctrine..."

It must be acknowledged, though, that because God is merciful and because He honours sincere intentions, He sometimes, at conversion, sovereignly intervenes in the problematic situations in the lives of some people.

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